

**SUMMARY OF THE
HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON
SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND SAFE CHILDREN REPORT**

Rep. Phil Smith, Chairman

At six hearings held around the state, the Committee received testimony from over 110 individuals. Following are the principal recommendations and suggestions offered.

The Safe Schools act was uniformly regarded as successful and helpful, especially the alternative education requirement for students suspended thereunder, and additional stable funding for these programs was repeatedly requested. Suggestions for improving the Act included: requiring law enforcement to notify schools when students aged 17 to 21 years commit violent crimes; extending the immunity granted to school personnel for good faith reporting of any information related to school safety; requiring public reporting by schools of information regarding suspensions and expulsions under the Act; making it easier and less expensive for a child's caretaker who is not the court-appointed legal guardian to enroll the child in the caretaker's school district; making student assaults on school personnel carry the same penalty as bringing weapons onto school premises; expanding the definition of school premises for the weapons provision; clarifying that the definition of "school district" is not limited to public schools; clarifying the requirements of readmittance hearings; establishing penalties for schools that do not timely comply with the information sharing provisions; and establishing a central data collection site for the shared information.

Chief among the suggestions for increasing school safety was exempting operational expenditures (i.e. "resource officers", security cameras, etc.) from the salary compliance mandates of the school foundation formula. Additional recommendations included: required photo ID badges for all students and school personnel; installing telephone or other 2-way communications in every classroom; establishing "safe schools hotlines" in every school district; and requiring trigger locks on all new guns sold in Missouri.

In the area of mental health, the need was expressed for more funding for more mental health professionals in schools, including certified school counselors and school psychiatrists. Also, it was recommended that educators and the public be trained on the early identification of children with mental and emotional disorders and children displaying the imminent warning signs of violent behavior, and that access to mental health services be provided for children so identified.

Two other primary recommendations were: more flexibility and control at the local level, especially regarding funding; and giving prosecutors more discretion and involvement in charging juveniles who commit violent crimes, even if the juveniles are not certified as adults.

The Committee made no recommendations regarding legislation.

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Julie Jinkens McNitt, Legislative Analyst